

PILOT

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## Hardening a Soft Line

House Speaker John McCormack (D-Mass.) and Representative A. Paul Kitchin (D-N.C.) earned plaudits by their stand last week against the sale of \$400 million worth of grain to Communist China and North Korea.

Apparently only the vigorous opposition of these two influential members of Congress prevented the granting, with President Kennedy's approval, of a private export license to ship six million tons of wheat and barley to Red China and 4.5 million tons to North Korea over a three-year period.

To the argument of proponents of the sale that "surplus grain can be used to temper the Chinese Communists' hostility toward the United States"—a weak and wishful line—the clear-thinking McCormack responded:

"The sales would serve to bolster a sinking Communist government at a time when we should be taking steps to hasten its downfall. Approval of the shipment of grain to Peiping would touch off a major foreign policy debate in Congress that could easily endanger passage of (the President's) trade program."

Congressman Kitchin put his feelings bluntly. He threatened a full-scale investigation. He is chairman of a special House investigating subcommittee.

Clearly, the two men were ready to "set the House afire" if the soft-line on the Red Chinese and equally Red North Koreans had prevailed.

Who were the proponents? Accord-

ing to Robert S. Allen and Paul Scott, Washington reporters whose column appears regularly in the DAILY PILOT, the advocates were Undersecretary of State George Ball and Dr. Walt Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Planning Commission.

After vigorously supporting the grain sale in a meeting with the President, Kennedy turned to his Secretary of Commerce, Luther Hodges. Hodges has responsibility for granting or denying the license but takes his orders from the White House.

It was Hodges who reported the views of McCormack and Kitchin to President Kennedy. He reminded the President that he had opposed granting the license from the outset unless the President declared permitting such sales to be in the national interest.

Assuming Allen and Scott are completely accurate in their report of the White House meeting, this image of the men and the event emerges:

Ball and Rostow—a soft line based on belief that the Russian-Chinese ideological quarrel can be turned to our advantage. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and Central Intelligence Director John McCone challenge this concept.

Kennedy—on the fence, apparently leaning toward Ball-Rostow but unwilling to jeopardize his trade bill in Congress.

McCormack, Kitchin and Hodges—firmly opposed to any softness toward the Communist enemy.

We salute the last named.

